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H3587 - 0002

OFFICE OF CHIEF OF COUNSEL FOR WAR CRIMES

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Date : 2 August 1948

I certify that Document Number I C - 72 - 74 was introduced into evidence as Exhibit Number GB - 66 in the Trial by the International Military Tribunal of Hermann GOERING, et al, which commenced on 20 November 1945, and that the attached photostat is a true and correct copy of the original.

Fred Niebergall

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# C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the annexed document TC-72-74 No. GB-66 is a photostat of an original document submitted in evidence by the British Prosecution under this number. The original document has been withdrawn in accordance with Rule 10 of the International Military Tribunal, and to the best of my knowledge and belief is to be held at the OCC IMT Evidence Library, Palace of Justice, Nuremberg

Paul Joosten

PAUL A. JOOSTEN

General Secretary
International Military Tribunal

Nuremberg, 30 July 1948

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[4.]

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL
NURNBERG, GERMANY
GB Exhibit 39
Filed Dec. 1945

Miscellaneous No. 9 (1939)

# DOCUMENTS

CONCERNING

## GERMAN-POLISH RELATIONS

AND THE

## OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1939

*Presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament by Command of His Majesty*

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On the other hand, His Majesty's Government, noting with interest the German Chancellor's reference in the message now under consideration to a limitation of armaments, believe that, if a peaceful settlement can be obtained, the assistance of the world could confidently be anticipated for practical measures to enable the transition from preparation for war to the normal activities of peaceful trade to be safely and smoothly effected.

6. A just settlement of these questions between Germany and Poland may open the way to world peace. Failure to reach it would ruin the hopes of better understanding between Germany and Great Britain, would bring the two countries into conflict, and might well plunge the whole world into war. Such an outcome would be a calamity without parallel in history.

GB-67

## No. 75.

*Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax (received 2·35 A.M. August 29).*

(Telegraphic.) *Berlin, August 28, 1939.*

I SAW the Chancellor at 10·30 this evening. He asked me to come at 10 P.M., but I sent word that I could not have the translation ready before the later hour. Herr von Ribbentrop was present, also Dr. Schmidt. Interview lasted one and a quarter hours.

2. Herr Hitler began by reading the German translation. When he had finished, I said that I wished to make certain observations from notes which I had made in the conversations with the Prime Minister and His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. In the first place I wished to say that we in England regarded it as absurd that Britain should be supposed by the German Government to consider the crushing of Germany as a settled policy. We held it to be no less astonishing that anyone in Germany should doubt for a moment that we would not fight for Poland if her independence or vital interests were menaced.

3. Our word was our word, and we had never and would never break it. In the old days Germany's word had the same value, and I quoted a passage from a German book (which Herr Hitler had read) about Marshal Blücher's exhortation to his troops when hurrying to the support of Wellington at Waterloo: "Forward, my children, I have given my word to my brother Wellington, and you cannot wish me to break it."

4. Herr Hitler at once intervened to observe that things were different 125 years ago. I said not so far as England was concerned. He wanted, I said, Britain's friendship. What value would he place on our friendship if we began it by disloyalty to a friend? Whatever some people might say, the British people sincerely desired an understanding with Germany, and no one more so than the Prime Minister (Herr von Ribbentrop remarked that Mr. Chamberlain had once said

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No. 74.

*Reply of His Majesty's Government dated August 28, 1939, to the German Chancellor's Communications of August 23 and 25, 1939.**

His Majesty's Government have received the message conveyed to them from the German Chancellor by His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin, and have considered it with the care which it demands.

They note the Chancellor's expression of his desire to make friendship the basis of the relations between Germany and the British Empire and they fully share this desire. They believe with him that if a complete and lasting understanding between the two countries could be established it would bring untold blessings to both peoples.

2. The Chancellor's message deals with two groups of questions: those which are the matters now in dispute between Germany and Poland and those affecting the ultimate relations of Germany and Great Britain. In connexion with these last, His Majesty's Government observe that the German Chancellor has indicated certain proposals which, subject to one condition, he would be prepared to make to the British Government for a general understanding. These proposals are, of course, stated in very general form and would require closer definition, but His Majesty's Government are fully prepared to take them, with some additions, as subjects for discussion and they would be ready, if the differences between Germany and Poland are peacefully composed, to proceed so soon as practicable to such discussion with a sincere desire to reach agreement.

3. The condition which the German Chancellor lays down is that there must first be a settlement of the differences between Germany and Poland. As to that, His Majesty's Government entirely agree. Everything, however, turns upon the nature of the settlement and the method by which it is to be reached. On these points, the importance of which cannot be absent from the Chancellor's mind, his message is silent, and His Majesty's Government feel compelled to point out that an understanding upon both of these is essential to achieving further progress. The German Government will be aware that His Majesty's Government have obligations to Poland by which they are bound and which they intend to honour. They could not, for any advantage offered to Great Britain, acquiesce in a settlement which put in jeopardy the independence of a State to whom they have given their guarantee.

4. In the opinion of His Majesty's Government a reasonable solution of the differences between Germany and Poland could and should be effected by agreement between the two countries on lines which would include the safeguarding of Poland's essential interests, and they recall that in his speech of the 28th April last the German Chancellor recognised the importance of these interests to Poland.

* Nos. 60 and 68.

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But, as was stated by the Prime Minister in his letter to the German Chancellor of the 22nd August, His Majesty's Government consider it essential for the success of the discussions which would precede the agreement that it should be understood beforehand that any settlement arrived at would be guaranteed by other Powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready if desired to make their contribution to the effective operation of such a guarantee.

In the view of His Majesty's Government it follows that the next step should be the initiation of direct discussions between the German and Polish Governments on a basis which would include the principles stated above, namely, the safeguarding of Poland's essential interests and the securing of the settlement by an international guarantee.

They have already received a definite assurance from the Polish Government that they are prepared to enter into discussions on this basis, and His Majesty's Government hope the German Government would for their part also be willing to agree to this course.

If, as His Majesty's Government hope, such discussion led to agreement the way would be open to the negotiation of that wider and more complete understanding between Great Britain and Germany which both countries desire.

5. His Majesty's Government agree with the German Chancellor that one of the principal dangers in the German-Polish situation arises from the reports concerning the treatment of minorities. The present state of tension, with its concomitant frontier incidents, reports of maltreatment and inflammatory propaganda, is a constant danger to peace. It is manifestly a matter of the utmost urgency that all incidents of the kind should be promptly and rigidly suppressed and that unverified reports should not be allowed to circulate, in order that time may be afforded, without provocation on either side, for a full examination of the possibilities of settlement. His Majesty's Government are confident that both the Governments concerned are fully alive to these considerations.

6. His Majesty's Government have said enough to make their own attitude plain in the particular matters at issue between Germany and Poland. They trust that the German Chancellor will not think that, because His Majesty's Government are scrupulous concerning their obligations to Poland, they are not anxious to use all their influence to assist the achievement of a solution which may commend itself both to Germany and to Poland.

That such a settlement should be achieved seems to His Majesty's Government essential, not only for reasons directly arising in regard to the settlement itself, but also because of the wider considerations of which the German Chancellor has spoken with such conviction.

7. It is unnecessary in the present reply to stress the advantage of a peaceful settlement over a decision to settle the questions at issue by force of arms. The results of a decision to use force have been clearly set out in the Prime Minister's letter to the Chancellor of the 22nd August, and His Majesty's Government do not doubt that they are as fully recognised by the Chancellor as by themselves.

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